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DEPT FOR DRL-MLGA, IO-RHS, EUR/PGI (ELDRIDGE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: ARMENIAN DEPUTY FM NON-COMMITTAL ON UNGA IRAN VOTES  
REF: STATE 116262

Classified By: CDA Joseph Pennington, Reasons 1.4(b,d)

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Kirakossian Non-Comittal on Votes...  
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[11](#). (C) Charge raised reftel points on upcoming UNGA votes on Iran with Deputy Foreign Minister Kirakossian on November 13. CDA strongly urged that the GOAM reverse its established pattern of supporting Iran in these votes. At the least, the Government should instruct its representative to abstain or absent himself when the votes take place. Kirakossian took note of U.S. concerns, but made no substantive comment. He promised to raise the matter with FM Nalbandian and get back to us in coming days.

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...But Reveals Irritation With GOI  
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[12](#). (C) Kirakossian revealed, however, that all is not well in Armenia's generally cordial relations with Iran. According to the Deputy FM, the Iranians have recently reneged on a bilateral education agreement under which each government pledged to recognize university degrees issued in the other country. (Note: Hundreds of Iranian students are enrolled in Armenian universities, most visibly in the Yerevan State University Faculty of Medicine. End note.) Although the Iranians gave the "pretext" that the move was related to "concerns over quality" in the Armenian university system, Kirakossian argued that the GOI was in fact penalizing Iranian students for perceived anti-regime sentiments. The issue came to the surface earlier this year when a number of Iranian-American entertainers gave performances in Yerevan, during which many in the audience (presumably including students) chanted slogans against the regime and held up anti-regime posters.

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COMMENT  
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[13](#). (C) Neither U.S. intervention nor the reported flap over the Iranian students will likely be enough to dissuade the GOAM from supporting Iran in the UNGA votes. The presence of a significant minority of ethnic Armenians in Iran (around 60,000) and Armenia's reliance on trade with Iran given closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey will probably

remain decisive in Armenian calculations at the UN.  
Nevertheless, we will press the case with additional contacts  
on the issue next week.

PENNINGTON